

BOOK REVIEW

RONALD A. COLEMAN. 2002. **The Wild Orchids of Arizona and New Mexico.** (ISBN 0-8014-3950-7, hbk.) Cornell University Press. Sage House, 512 E. State Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. (Orders: www.cornellpress.cornell.edu). \$39.95, 272 pp, 35 line drawings, 36 maps, 160 color plates, 6" × 9 1/4".

This volume is just one of many regional orchid floras published for North America within the last 15 years. Though the *Native Orchids of the United States and Canada* was published in 1975 by Carlyle Luer, regional floras, such as this one, update nomenclature and more clearly define geographic ranges. Since Orchidaceae is one of the largest flowering plant families, has a cosmopolitan distribution, and occupies many diverse habitats, small regional floras, like this one, provide a baseline of knowledge. Coleman presents to his readers a rather varied orchid flora in Arizona and New Mexico, composed of 35 species and 14 genera. The most diverse region in both states for spotting orchids is the Mogollon Rim. The combination of high elevation and precipitation provides habitat for orchids, in comparison to the rest of the two states where desert or high plains dominate. For those interested in collecting orchids, you might think twice. All of the orchids of Arizona and a few in New Mexico are protected by law, so all you should take away from your orchid-hunting adventures are photographs and memories.

The book begins with a lucid discussion of floral morphology, habitats and geographic distribution in Arizona and New Mexico, as well as information on blooming seasons and conservation. Next, a key to orchid genera is provided and could not be more straightforward. The terminology is basic and would be useful to anyone, even those with only a basic understanding of botanical terminology. Following the introduction are genera and species descriptions. Genera and species are listed in alphabetical order. For each genus, the author provides a citation of effective publication, etymology and a rather informal description or discussion of the group. For example, in the discussion on *Cypripedium*, the reader learns that the lip of the flower serves as a trap to the pollinator, who once inside finds it hard to escape. Moreover, the discussion on *Corallorhiza* helps enthusiasts clearly distinguish the members of this genus from those of *Hexalectris*. If there is more than one species present, a key is provided. Following the generic discussions are species descriptions, which also include a citation of publication and etymology of the epithet. In addition, synonymy, a short non-technical description, distribution, habitat, blooming season, conservation issues and threats to each species are included. Because the author has taken an informal approach to describing each species, it becomes much more interesting to the reader. A case in point is the interesting story on nomenclature of *Schiedeella arizonica* and how misapplied names can lead to taxonomic confusion. In the margin next to each species description is a line drawing of the flower. These illustrations provide a practical identification tool. A dot map for each species shows presence of that species in Arizona and New Mexico counties.

Several appendices conclude the book: 1) Excluded species, 2) Watch list of species not yet reported from Arizona or New Mexico, 3) Herbarium collections studied, and 4) Distribution of orchids in Arizona and New Mexico listed by county. Color photographs seem strategically placed at the beginning of the book, where they can whet the reader's appetite. Most of the photos are close-ups of flowers or fruits, but also include examples of plants in habitat.

This is a wonderful publication on orchids packed with an abundance of information useful to anyone with any affinity to orchids. Coleman's writing style is clear, concise, and unpretentious. It would make a lovely addition to the library of a native plant lover, botanist, or orchid enthusiast.—
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